



Gary Bishop of OHM Environmental Services holds up "before" and "after" samples of water from the sumps at the Bossert Corp.

Photo by Gerry Raymond

Clean-up at Bossert plant taking longer than expected

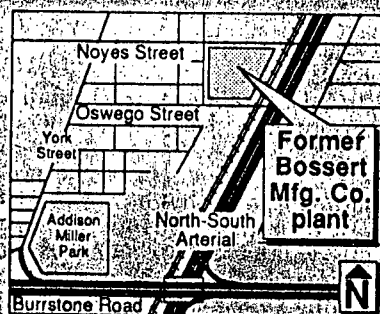
By MIKE HOUSTON
Observer-Dispatch

Clean-up of the abandoned Bossert Manufacturing Corp. building in Utica already has taken longer than expected and the price tag may top the \$1.3 million set aside for the project.

At blame, say officials of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, More hazardous debris and liquid wastes than initially anticipated.

The EPA had hoped the clean-up would take two weeks, but workers have been at the site for eight weeks and may be there six more.

More than \$900,000 has been spent cleaning the area and an EPA official says he doesn't know how much the final bill



Graphic by David Price

will be.

"(The cost) will be determined later ... because we're still working right now," said Jack Harmon, the EPA's on-site coordinator. "The amount of debris was underestimated. We may be here four to six weeks longer, but that's hard to say — it all depends on what we come

across."

To date, 27 people from the EPA and a private firm working at the site have come across deep vats of oils and water — byproducts of the Bossert production process — whose mostly hazardous contents have far exceeded estimates.

Of the 54 vats the EPA has thus far found, 51 had varying degrees of hazardous materials. The EPA first thought only 46 vats were at the site and Harmon said more could still be uncovered.

Most of those vats have been drained and thousands of gallons of water and oil have been pumped from them into special holding tanks. There, after a complex process, sludge is removed from the mixture and

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By ED RUFF
Observer-Dispatch

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BOSSERT

Continued from Page 1A

transported to an EPA landfill in Alabama. The remaining water is then purified and used in the ongoing clean-up.

Harmon said the mixture drained from almost all of the vats contained PCBs, a suspected cancer-causing substance that in small doses can irritate the throat and lungs. EPA officials, who have cordoned off the entire building and have a security guard stationed there site 24 hours a day, have said any health threat is limited.

Besides removing mixture from the vats, EPA officials have filled more than 300 55-gallon drums with a variety of chemicals and acids. Clean-up crews also have

come across an unexpected underground tank filled with about 20,000 gallons of thick fuel oil and 22 transformers, seven of which contained PCBs.

Buffered from public scrutiny by fences and shrubs fronting the nearby North-South Arterial, EPA officials clad in white protective suits slowly work through the building's main courtyard, carting debris from inside.

Large piles of garbage, 55-gallon drums and hefty wooden crates dot the area, which is surrounded by three large holding tanks filled with sand and different colored liquids. A steady stream of forklifts and tractor-trailer trucks also filter through

the compound.

This week, EPA officials plan a high-pressure laser cleaning of the building's walls and floors to get rid of byproducts of the production process that have adhered to the building. High-pressure water will be used to get rid of the grease and oils located across the building, remnants expected to contain at least some traces of PCBs.

Bossert, a metal parts manufacturing firm, closed in March 1985. Bossert Manufacturing still is listed as the owner of record of the 1002 Oswego St. building in the city assessor's office. It has been closed since April 1985. The company operated under Chapter 11

bankruptcy proceedings for two years trying to reorganize and return to solvency, but gave up in May 1985 and converted to Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Its assets were either liquidated or sold. Federal funds now are financing the clean-up, but it will be up to EPA attorneys to determine who will pay that bill.

Although the project is proceeding, the slow pace isn't sitting all that well with some city officials. "It's taking more money and it seems as if the clean up is going slower than it should and that's not fair to the neighbors in the area and those of us who want to eliminate blight in this city," Mayor Louis LaPolla said.



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